

JAMES  
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC



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J.K. MCKEE

**MESSIANIC**  
**APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# JAMES

## FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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Front cover image is of the Dead Sea from the top of Masada

Back cover image is of an ancient Jerusalem wall

Photos taken by J.K. McKee in Israel, November 2004

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# ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
Ara: Aramaic	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old &amp; New Testament)</i>
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
b. Babylonian Talmud ( <i>Talmud Bavli</i> )	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	KJV: King James Version
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	LXX: Septuagint
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	m. Mishnah
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NIGTC: <i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	NICNT: <i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Ger: German	NIV: New International Version (1984)
GNT: Greek New Testament	NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
Grk: Greek	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community	NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew &amp; Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)	NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
Heb: Hebrew	NT: New Testament
	orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world

OT: Old Testament  
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*  
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)  
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)  
t. Tosefta  
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament  
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*  
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*  
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)  
TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)  
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*  
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*  
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition  
v(s). verse(s)  
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*  
Vul: Latin Vulgate  
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*  
Yid: Yiddish  
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

# PROLOGUE

It should go without saying that the Epistle of James is a highly valued and appreciated text for many in our broad Messianic faith community. While there are many active discussions and debates pertaining to statements such as, “faith, if it has no works, is dead” (2:17), “a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (2:24), and the ever-imperative “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world” (1:27)—on the whole our engagement with the Epistle of James, at least on a surface level, is one that tends to be generally positive. In all of my family’s experience in the Messianic community, since 1995, we have never really encountered any Messianic person who does not have some favorable disposition toward reading and applying James’ letter to his or her life. We have, however, encountered many of our Christian brothers and sisters, widely ignore or discount the messages of James, or are at least confused in many ways, feeling that James has an irreconcilable message when compared or contrasted to Paul’s letters. Likewise, there are Messianic people, who while favorable to James, have probably not let its words penetrate their hearts and minds enough—as this letter certainly presents many challenging statements to the spirituality and behavior of each of us.

When many think of James the Just, they think of a dedicated, godly man, who was committed to a life of complete service to the Body of Messiah. While James the half-brother of Yeshua was likely too young to have been a noticeable part of His teaching ministry, James’ contemplative, fair-minded, practical, but also direct approach to the issues of the day, is detectable in the Biblical record we have of him—most notably that of the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council and the letter that bears his name. It is quite easy to peruse through the Epistle of James, and then be compelled to flip to the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew chs. 5-7, noticing a wide variety of parallel words and connections between the concepts elucidated. Many a Messiah follower are greatly moved by the historical record regarding James, as seen in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* (2.1.2, 3; 2.23.4-5), and his fierce dedication to prayer, holiness, and acts of kindness and mercy toward others. When we each reflect upon the example and teachings of James, we all see a figure of faith worthy of emulation, and are significantly reminded of our own mortal limitations.

*James for the Practical Messianic* was the first real volume issued in the *Practical Messianic* commentary series (when I realized that this would become a series), and the first study conducted for my Wednesday Night Bible Study podcast, which originally started in 2005. James has a timeless moral and ethical message, which we should all cherish deeply, and one which doubtlessly issues many challenges to people in our still-emerging and developing Messianic movement. Over the past year or so (late 2011-2013), as each title released by our ministry has been formatted for paperback and Amazon Kindle eBook, I have had to evaluate the current content status of each, with some revisions and updates required here and there. In the case of the Epistle of James, the letter itself needed to be revisited, not because of any major changes of interpretation or perspective on my part—but more specifically because of the length of time that has passed since this publication’s initial release, new challenges present in the Messianic world, and most significantly because of new commentaries and resources issued on James since 2005 (as well as new resources on James acquired for my library).

This commentary on James has gone through a few noticeable updates, which include expansion of previous points, more examination into the Greek source text of the letter, but most especially engagement with some more commentators on the epistle, either released since 2005 or acquired by me (i.e., the volumes by Peter Davids, Luke T. Johnson, Ben Witherington III, Dan G. McCartney, Scot McKnight). More detail has been specifically expelled in investigating various Jamean passages that appear to be in conflict with Pauline

passages over the issue of “justification.” Is the “justification” in view a remission of sins and a declaration of innocence before the Holy One, *or* might it pertain more to a demonstration of membership of a man or woman as a part of God’s people? Too many are not aware of the wide meanings that justification has for both Hebrew and Greek, which English tends to lack.

Given the almost eight years which have transpired since *James for the Practical Messianic* was first released, while I have given more attention to some new and useful proposals regarding this letter—my primary attention is, as always, to the text, and how James should be considered and applied by individuals within the Messianic movement. There is no question, now in 2013, that the broad Messianic movement really needs to hear what James the Just has to say. Over the past several years, as we have entered into the 2010s, there have been a variety of less-than-useful spiritual and theological perspectives witnessed, which have been deterring us from accomplishing the goals of the Kingdom of God. We need to decisively return to the words and messages of those early Messianic leaders like James, so that we might be useful for the Kingdom. James poignantly says, “you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (4:14). Many of us need to be humbled, committing ourselves back to God and His purposes, so that we do not waste any unnecessary time, energy, and resources on those things which do not only take people away from Messiah Yeshua—but do not contribute to the human wholeness that James’ letter speaks so prolifically of!

J.K. McKee  
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# INTRODUCTION

The Epistle of James<sup>1</sup> has been one of the most debated books of the Bible among theologians, examiners, and many laypeople, for centuries. At the same time, the Epistle of James has also been highly valued by many people seeking instruction on practical matters of faith and obedience, good works, and in making a difference in the world for God. Outside of the Gospels, the letter of James is regarded as probably having the most substantial Jewish character of any of the writings in the Apostolic Scriptures, as it is traditionally the product of James the Just, half-brother of the Lord Yeshua. The letter of James has a very direct message for people who are stagnant in their faith, and are not living up to the essential matters of holiness and piety. It is for these, and many other reasons, why having an appropriate understanding of the Epistle of James—and the role it plays not only for spirituality, but among the other books of the Apostolic canon—is so important for Messiah followers.

That James demonstrated a strong fidelity, to God’s Torah and a Jewish way of life (Acts 15:13-21; 21:18-24), is something which bears strongly on this letter, as a great deal of difficulty is present for Christian readers who tend to discount or devalue the importance of God’s Law. However, even among those who tend to have a negative disposition, for the Law of Moses in the post-resurrection era, have to admit that James 1:22—“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves”—can surely be regarded as **“the most famous command in the NT”** (Douglas J. Moo),<sup>2</sup> which born again Believers certainly need to obey. Those, who choose to delve into the Epistle of James, see a heavy emphasis upon both faith *and* works, as James intended to address a genuine faith for Believers, manifested in good works of mercy and grace toward others, with a definite concern for the marginalized in society.

A cursory review, of how the Epistle of James has been approached in history, does reveal how this letter has not always been appreciated. James was not immediately accepted as canonical by a wide range of authorities within the emerging Christian Church of the Second and Third Centuries. By the Third Century, Clement of Alexandria recognized James as being part of “the other general epistles” (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.1), but it was not universally accepted for instruction among all in early Christianity. Factors, contributing to people tending to ignore James, may have come from the lack of “heavy theology” in James, what appears to be James’ emphasis on works contrasted to grace, and perhaps even the fact that the name of Yeshua (Jesus) only appears twice in the letter (1:1; 2:1). While many in ancient Christianity did value James and its message, there was a tendency to focus far more on the Pauline letters, and what was regarded as their “heavy theology,” rather than the more “primitive” sayings of James. A negative disposition toward James would appear later in the Reformation, as Martin Luther assigned James to an appendix in his German translation of the Bible, not really knowing what to do with it. Yet, other Reformers and significant Protestant leaders have highly valued James, even if being cautious here or there with it.

Luke T. Johnson indicates how “Luther’s view dominated much of the scholarly approach to the letter until very recently. Most readers through the ages...reached a position like that of the patristic interpreters.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout much of Christian history, it has been rightly recognized that James and Paul had different vantage points which need to be recognized and appreciated, as they approach the subject of “faith” from

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that in spite of the common reference to James as “the Book of James,” I am going to purposefully refer to the text as either the Epistle of James or a letter of James, and not use this reference. By failing to forget that this text is a letter written to a specific audience in a specific setting, we can make the common error of thinking that this was a text written *directly to us*. Our goal as responsible interpreters is to try to reconstruct what this letter meant *to its original audience first*, before applying its message in a modern-day setting.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Luke T. Johnson, “The Letter of James,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 12:177.

different angles, per some of the circumstances of their intended audiences. However, due to the quantity of the Pauline letters, in comparison to the single Epistle of James, even among those who have highly regarded James, there has still not been enough academic engagement on James, perhaps until the past half-century.

Previous negative examination of James, or dismissal or downplaying of James, has been changing in much contemporary Bible scholarship. Some of this has been geared toward various examiners wanting to have a more holistic reading of Scripture, but perhaps more has been geared toward wanting to better understand the Jewish background of the New Testament, and what is likely a very early product of the First Century *ekklēsia*. Given this letter's emphasis on good works, godliness, and the acts of kindness and mercy required by God's Torah—not only have piety and holiness movements in evangelical Christianity appreciated the Epistle of James, but James tends to bear special importance for most of today's Messianic people. With some renewed, and highly important, Christian interest in the Epistle of James detectable over the past few decades, how significant is it that Messianic Believers have a good handle on it?

Today, given the huge bevy of scholastic interest in Second Temple Judaism, emerging Christianity, Biblical history in general—and with it having to navigate conservative, liberal, and other strata—examining the Epistle of James, even with just a passing familiarity with some of the proposals seen, can be a bit daunting. So as we prepare to enter into what James communicates to men and women of faith, this might be the reason why Scot McKnight opens his own commentary on James with the admonition, “read James in light of James!”<sup>4</sup> He further remarks how “James is a one-of-a-kind document...it is the substance of James, combining as it does Torah observance in a new key with both wisdom and eschatology in a Jewish-Christian milieu, that forms its special character.”<sup>5</sup> As important as it will be for us to recognize some of the discussions and debates surrounding authorship of this letter, and how various people have under- or over-emphasized it, *ultimately it will be how each of us as readers can appreciate and apply the letter to our lives*, which is what matters the most.

It will be important for each of us to see how various Christian voices, some in past history, but some in more modern history, have approached and applied the Epistle of James. *We will see many perspectives with which we can not only agree, but take direction from.* At the same time, as Messianic Believers in a still-maturing and still-emerging Messianic movement, there are going to be some admonitions that James himself may be said to communicate to us, especially given the high emphasis seen on Torah observance in our faith community. James absolutely believed in the relevance of Moses' Teaching for people of faith, but James also emphasized acts of kindness and mercy toward others. James is highly valued by most of today's Messianic people, but this letter might not always be applied in ways that James originally intended. How easy, or difficult, will it be for Messianic people to possibly make some needed course corrections, reading James' letter in its entirety, and appreciating James for the role it plays among all the books of the Bible?

## WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF JAMES?

When encountering various study Bibles, encyclopedic entries, or commentaries, one will find that there is an evitable amount of discussion about the authorship of the Epistle of James.<sup>6</sup> While there has been longstanding acceptance of the canonicity of James in Christianity, even with some doubts in the Second and Third Centuries (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.3; 2.23.25), James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua, has widely been regarded as the traditional author, with the material of this letter produced anywhere from the 40s-60s C.E. However, in surveying a history of James' interpretation, not all examiners have been convinced

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<sup>4</sup> Scot McKnight, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 2, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), pp 726-746; D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp 621-626; Peter Davids, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp 2-22; Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: James*, Vol. 48 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), pp xxxi-xli; Douglas J. Moo, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp 9-20; Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), pp 395-401; Dan G. McCartney, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), pp 8-32; McKnight, pp 13-38.

that James, half-brother of Yeshua, was the author or originator of the material in this letter. There are various other candidates for the authorship of the Epistle of James, which have been proposed.

The English name “James” actually renders the Greek *lakōbos* (Ἰακώβος), which is one of two transliterations for the Hebrew name Jacob or *Ya’akov* (יַעֲקֹב). In the Septuagint, the name *Ya’akov*, in reference to the Patriarch Jacob, is rendered as *lakōb* (Ἰακώβ), and this usage carries over into the Greek New Testament. However, a second form, *lakōbos*, appears also in the Greek New Testament, perhaps to distinguish *lakōb* or the Patriarch Jacob from others. Similarly, the English name James is a derivative of the name “Jacob,” and it is likely that for this reason it is rendered as such in our English Bibles. In the environs of Jerusalem and Judea, James would have been known as *Ya’akov*, even though when communicating with Greek speakers he would have referred to himself as *lakōbos*. The difference between *lakōb* and *lakōbos* is probably not that substantial, like the difference between Jacob and Jake (or even between James and Jim). In much examination, the adjective Jacobean is often used in reference to the Epistle of James,<sup>7</sup> although Jamesian or Jamean can also be used.

There are at least four specific individuals in the Apostolic Scriptures referred to as “James,” some of whom could have been a legitimate author or originator of the material of the Epistle of James:

1. **James the son of Zebedee** was one of Yeshua’s earliest disciples (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). He was the brother of John, and the two of them together were given the title of “Boanerges” or “B’nei-Regesh” (CJB), meaning “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). Their mother’s name was Salome (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40), and the two of them, along with their father, and Peter and Andrew, were partners in a fishing business along the Sea of Galilee (Luke 5:10; Matthew 4:18-21). This James was in the inner circle of Yeshua’s Disciples along with his brother John and Peter, having witnessed both the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28) and Yeshua’s agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33). It is widely discounted that James the son of Zebedee could have been the author of this epistle, because of how Herod Agrippa “had James the brother of John put to death with a sword” (Acts 12:2) very early on, making him the first apostolic martyr.

2. **James the son of Alphaeus** was another of the Twelve Disciples of Yeshua (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Other than a reference to him as one of the Disciples, no other information is given about him in the Gospels or the Book of Acts. Some think that since Levi is described as being “the son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14), that the two of them were brothers. James the son of Alphaeus is the traditional author of this epistle in Roman Catholicism,<sup>8</sup> a position also adhered to by the Reformer John Calvin.<sup>9</sup>

There is some discussion in more recent scholarship, identifying a person as **James the son of Mary**, whose parents were likely Mary and Cleopas (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 19:25). Some choose to identify him as being James the son of Alphaeus, but others do not.<sup>10</sup>

3. **James the father of Judas** is listed in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. Whether or not this James was actually the father of an apostle, making there be a father-son combination in the list of Apostles, has been debated. It “depends on the interpretation of the genitive [case indicating

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<sup>7</sup> It does have to be observed how the adjective “Jacobean” can be easily confused with the Jacobite rebellion period in Eighteenth Century British history.

<sup>8</sup> Duane F. Watson, “James, Letter of,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 670.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark & Luke and James & Jude*, trans. A.W. Morrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 260.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Donald A. Hagner, “James,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:618; Robert E. Van Voorst, “James,” in *EDB*, 669.

possession] (Gk. *Ioudas Iakōbou* [Ἰούδαν Ἰακώβου]),” even though “Nothing of special import is said of this James in the Gospels” (*ISBE*).<sup>11</sup> One could expect that if this James were the author of this epistle there would be more said about him.

**4. James the brother of the Lord**, known in early Christian writings as James the Just (*Iakōbos ho dikaios*, Ἰάκωβος ὁ δίκαιος), was presumably the oldest of the half-brothers of Yeshua (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; cf. Jude 1), although it is observed how Yeshua’s own brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:3-5). It was apparently only after Yeshua’s resurrection that He appeared to James, and then the other Apostles, and James believed (1 Corinthians 15:7). James had a definite place of importance, as the main leader of the Jerusalem assembly (Acts 12:17; 21:18; Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 9:5), and was the voice who issued the Apostolic decree regarding the inclusion of the non-Jewish Believers in the Body of Messiah at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21). Much Christian tradition throughout history, adhered to by many conservative evangelicals of our time, has regarded James the Just as being the author or originator of the material in the Epistle of James.

Liberal examiners have been those tending to doubt genuine Jamean authorship of this letter,<sup>12</sup> in various degrees. Some liberals do espouse genuine Jamean origin of the sayings which appear in this letter, which would later have been composed into an epistle by either a student or admirer or James, a view which is followed by some conservatives.<sup>13</sup> A fair number of conservatives, though, continue to espouse genuine Jamean authorship of this epistle, or composition via an amanuensis or secretary, during James’ own lifetime.<sup>14</sup> Various conservatives espouse a two-stage composition of the Epistle of James, involving (1) materials or sermonic messages originating during the lifetime of James the Just, with (2) a composition being written a generation or so later by a redactor, using it for the needs of his own community.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the main arguments against Jamean authorship of this letter, espoused by either liberals who consider the epistle to be widely pseudepigraphal, with some of them also appealed to by conservatives who espouse a two-staged composition,<sup>16</sup> include:

1. The Epistle of James demonstrates a high competency in Greek, and familiarity with classical moral philosophies.
2. The Epistle of James appears to misrepresent or misunderstand the teachings of Paul.
3. The Epistle of James has no real concern with the purity laws and rituals of the Torah, such as the debate over circumcision, necessitating a later time in the First-Second Centuries C.E. when these were not substantial issues.
4. The Epistle of James had a slow, canonical acceptance among the writings of the Apostolic Scriptures.

Some of the reasons proposed for denying genuine Jamean authorship and/or involvement with the letter, such as a misunderstanding of Paul’s letters, or issues like circumcision not being addressed, are theological. Others, such as the high Greek competency of the Epistle of James, which was apparently a product of a Jerusalem Jew, are historical. There are good reasons for these sorts of claims, denying Jamean authorship of the epistle, to not have that strong a basis.

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<sup>11</sup> R.L. Harris, “James,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 2:958.

<sup>12</sup> A.E. Barnett, “James, Letter of,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:795; Bo Ivar Reicke, *The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 4.

<sup>13</sup> R.W. Wall, “James, Letter of,” in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), pp 547-548; Johnson, in *NIB*, 12:183.

<sup>14</sup> W.W. Wessel, “James, Epistle of,” in *ISBE*, 2:965-964.

<sup>15</sup> Davids, pp 12-13, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sophie Laws, “James, Epistle of,” in *ABD*, 3:622; Richard Bauckham, “James,” in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1483.

Ralph P. Martin, who is relatively conservative in his theology, is one who adheres to a two-stage composition for the Epistle of James. He explains his position more on linguistic grounds, less so on theological grounds:

“The array of objections seems formidable, and on the several grounds of the letter’s style, its Jewishness in tone and content, its post-Pauline ambience, and the suspicions it engendered among the church fathers and canon makers, it seems hardly to have been written *as it stands* by James of Jerusalem....[A]ssuming a two-layered stage in the production of the letter, the presence of hellenistic idioms and the polishing of the material ascribed to James the Jerusalem martyr with stylistic traits and literary flourishes such as the diatribe and repartee would be the work of an enterprising editor. He published his master’s work in epistolary form as a plan to gain for it credibility as an apostolic letter. And in doing so, he aimed to address a situation of critical pastoral importance in his region.”<sup>17</sup>

While a two-staged hypothesis for the composition of James is to be preferred from that of this letter being a total pseudograph, written a generation or two after James’ death, perhaps almost three-quarters of a century from the 40s-early 60s C.E. into the Second Century C.E. (and which raises some important ethical questions),<sup>18</sup> many conservatives are not at all convinced that reasons given against Jamean authorship—including the Greek of James and the slow acceptance of the letter into the canon—necessitate that this epistle did not mainly come from him directly. As Donald Guthrie observes in his *New Testament Introduction*,

“It is, of course, conceivable, that someone recognized the general value of James’ homilies and was prompted, therefore, to edit them into a kind of circular under the name of James who, after all, was the true author of the material used. But a thing is not true because it is conceivable, but because the evidence requires it, and this can hardly be said in this case. If the editor was working under the supervision of James himself, this would amount almost to the traditional view. But if he is editing some time later than James’ lifetime the problem of motive becomes acute, for why a later editor should suddenly have conceived such a publication plan when the great majority of the intended readers must have known that James was already dead is difficult to see, and it is even more difficult to understand how the letter came to be received.”<sup>19</sup>

Douglas J. Moo, a more recent commentator on the Epistle of James (1999), remarks on how “we possess little evidence that pseudepigraphical epistles in the ancient world were accepted as authentic and truthful.”<sup>20</sup> He further states, “The very fact that James was accepted as a canonical book...presumes that the early Christians who made this decision were sure that James wrote it.”<sup>21</sup> Dan G. McCartney informs us how “virtually all scholars acknowledge that this prominent leader of the church in Jerusalem is the James referred to in James 1:1,”<sup>22</sup> even though many doubt whether the material originated from such a James directly or indirectly.

As far as people in today’s broad Messianic movement are concerned, most will be highly inclined to accept genuine Jamean authorship of the letter, sometime during the lifetime of James the Just of Jerusalem. It is possible, that as Messianic engagement and scholarship diversifies, some may decide to entertain alternatives such as a two-staged composition of the epistle, or James being a compilation of genuine sayings of James assembled later by an student or admirer. While I think that the Epistle of James was a product of the Lord’s half-brother himself, composed during his lifetime, that a secretary or amanuensis was there to assist, is something likely.

**This commentary accepts genuine Jamean authorship of the Epistle of James**, that the letter originated from James the Just, half-brother of Yeshua, and leader of the Jerusalem congregation. We will be engaging

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<sup>17</sup> Martin, pp lxiii, lxxvii.

<sup>18</sup> Witherington, 396 rightly asserts how,

“We cannot a priori rule out the possibility of a pseudonymous document in the canon since it was a known practice in antiquity—even in Jewish and Christian contexts—but there are good reasons to doubt that such a practice would be seen as simply an accepted literary device that raised no moral issues in regard to plagiarism.”

<sup>19</sup> Guthrie, 746.

<sup>20</sup> Moo, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>22</sup> McCartney, 14.

with various resources that do deny this, in various degrees, including those who adhere to a two-stage hypothesis (Davids, Martin), or some more liberal voices unsure about James' message and theology.

## WHO WAS JAMES?

James, the half-brother of Yeshua, was likely too young to feature in Yeshua's teaching and healing ministry, and was not among His original disciples (Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). It is likely, as John 7:5 notes how "For not even His brothers were believing in Him," that James was among those who had his doubts about Yeshua. However, the risen Yeshua appeared to James—"He appeared to James, then to all the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15:7; cf. Acts 1:14)—and as a result of this James had to have believed, and following this quickly arose to take over the leadership of the Jerusalem assembly of Messiah followers. While James was an apostolic figure and leader for certain, he is generally not called an apostle, because the role and office he occupied may be regarded as a bit higher than that of an apostle. James presided over the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, and was acknowledged as a leader by the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2:9). In both conservative and liberal scholarship, James the Just is widely recognized as being the main representative of the Jewish Believers in Jerusalem and Judea, as his writings do widely represent a more Jewish-specific approach to issues, rather than the more metropolitan, Mediterranean approach of those like Paul.

The first instance where James the Lord's brother is mentioned in the Book of Acts is in **Acts 12:17**, in the context of Peter being broken out of Herod's imprisonment by the angels, and then his showing up at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, as those gathered prayed for his release. It is recorded, "But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, 'Report these things to James and the brethren.' Then he left and went to another place." James the son of Zebedee had just been martyred at the hands of Herod in Acts 12:2, and so by default the James mentioned in Acts 12:17 would have to be James the half-brother of Yeshua. While the Apostle Peter likewise played an important role in the leadership of the First Century *ekklēsia*, this is a Biblical indication that James had already assumed, perhaps as Yeshua's half-brother, an important role in the Jerusalem assembly (cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.2-3).<sup>23</sup>

In **Galatians 2:1-10** the Apostle Paul mentions that he, Barnabas, and Titus made a visit to Jerusalem, to present the good news, as he preached it among the nations, to the Jerusalem leaders. In his letter, Paul specifically acknowledged how "James and Cephas and John...were acknowledged pillars" (Galatians 2:9, NRSV). There is disagreement among examiners, across the spectrum, as to whether or not the Galatians 2:1-10 meeting is the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council, *or* whether it is the relief visit, as is seen in Acts 11:28-30. If it is the relief visit, than the meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders was widely a private visit, as he reported to them some of the preliminary work among the nations. The fact that Paul would make a point to acknowledge James as a key leader, especially as following his own Damascus road salvation encounter, "I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:17), is important not only for an historical framework for reading the New Testament—but for a theological framework of not trying to think that James the Just and the Apostle Paul are at significant odds.<sup>24</sup> This especially concerns how one reads **Acts 21:16-26**, and the rumor about Paul, acknowledged as such by James, that Paul apparently taught the Jewish Believers in the Diaspora to abandon the Torah.

The second instance where James the Lord's brother appears in the Book of Acts is in **Acts ch. 15**, where the Jerusalem Council assembles to discuss the matter of what to do about the new, non-Jewish Believers coming to faith in Yeshua. Did they have to be circumcised as proselytes, and be ordered to keep the Torah, to

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<sup>23</sup> "Then also James, called the brother of our Lord, because he is also called the son of Joseph...This James, therefore, whom the ancients, on account of the excellence of his virtue, surnamed the Just, was the first that received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem...Clement, in the sixth book of his Institutions, represented it thus: 'Peter, and James, and John after the ascension of our Savior, though they had been preferred by our Lord, did not contend for the honor, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem'" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.2, 3).

Eusebius of Caesarea: *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C.F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 35.

<sup>24</sup> For a review of Galatians 2:1-10, consult the relevant sections of the author's commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

be saved (Acts 15:1, 5)? The council decisively ruled against this, given the testimony of the Apostle Peter (Acts 15:8-9). The ruling of James the Just was that Tanach prophecy was in the process of taking place (Acts 15:15), specifically the inclusion of the nations within the Tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16-18; Amos 9:11-12, LXX)—a vision of not only a restored Twelve Tribes of Israel, but also of an expanded Kingdom realm of Israel welcoming in God’s faithful remnant from all humanity. The Apostolic decree, mandating the non-Jewish Believers to abstain from idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled meat, and blood (Acts 15:20, 29), would decisively cut the new Greek and Roman Believers off from their old, pagan spheres of influence—making Jewish Believers, and by extension the Jewish community, their new sphere of social and spiritual involvement (Acts 15:21). There was no need to order such people to keep the Torah of Moses, as Tanach prophecy anticipated the nations coming to Zion to be taught God’s Law (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4), and the fact that the Holy Spirit was to write the Torah’s instructions onto the hearts and minds of people via the promised New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).<sup>25</sup>

There are some important attestations, made of James the Just, seen in early Christian writings.<sup>26</sup> Christians of the Second and Third Centuries saw James as a very pious and devout man, dedicated to the Torah, the Temple, and Judaism, but also one who was extremely kind, gentle, and loving. Hegesippus, a Christian leader from the Second Century C.E., is recorded by Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* to bear the following testimony of James:

“James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostles. This apostle was consecrated from his mother’s womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woolen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camel’s, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called the Just, and Oblias (or Zaddick and Ozleam) which signifies justice and protection of the people; as the prophets declare concerning him” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4-6).<sup>27</sup>

Generally speaking, conservative examiners have been accepting of Hegesippus’ sentiments regarding James the Just.<sup>28</sup> Given the traditional predilection to James having been one, most often in prayer for people, such service is often associated with how Acts 6:7 records, “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.” James is widely thought to have had some kind of positive relationship with many of the priests and Temple authorities, at least offering some kind of secondary service in prayer and liturgical worship. This is something which eventually caused the death of James, though, not only because of his Messiah faith, but also because of his genuine piety in contrast to the empty religion of many of his contemporaries. The historical record of Eusebius informs us,

“[T]here were many therefore of the rulers that believed, [and] there arose a tumult among the Jews, Scribes, and Pharisees, saying that there was a danger, that the people would now expect Jesus as the Messiah. They came therefore together, and said to James, ‘We entreat thee, restrain the people, who are led astray after Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat thee to persuade all that are coming to the feast of the Passover rightly concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in thee. For we and all the people bear thee testimony that thou art just, and thou respectest not persons’” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.10).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For a review of the deliberations of the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council, and Acts 21:16-26, consult the author’s commentary *Acts 15 for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>26</sup> Martin, pp xvii-lxi offers an excellent summation of ancient traditions about James, but is uncertain, and expresses doubts, about how many of them are historically accurate.

<sup>27</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, pp 59-60.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, pp lxvi-lxvii is one who doubts what Hegesippus says of James, as he thinks it inappropriately “turns James into a Nazirite.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, 60.

It appears that while various scribes and Pharisees had some problems with James, because of him declaring Yeshua as the Messiah, they still respected him. Eusebius' record continues, describing how things did reach a critical point, and James was beaten publicly for not renouncing his faith or denouncing Yeshua publicly. While being stoned and clubbed to death, James still prayed to God that those murdering him would be forgiven:

“Persuade therefore the people not to be led astray by Jesus, for we and all the people have great confidence in thee. Stand therefore upon a wing of the temple, that thou mayest be conspicuous on high, and thy words may be easily heard by all the people; for all the tribes have come together on account of the Passover, with some of the Gentiles also. The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, placed James upon a wing of the temple, and cried out to him, ‘O thou just man, whom we ought all to believe, since the people are led astray after Jesus that was crucified, declare to us what is the door to Jesus that was crucified.’ And he answered with a loud voice, ‘Why do you ask me respecting Jesus the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven.’ And as many were confirmed, and gloried in this testimony of James, and said, ‘Hosanna to the son of David,’ these same priests and Pharisees said to one another, ‘We have done badly in affording such testimony to Jesus, but let us go up and cast him down, that they may dread to believe in him.’ And they cried out, ‘Oh, oh, Justus himself is deceived,’ and they fulfilled that which is written in Isaiah, ‘Let us take away the just, because he is offensive to us; wherefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings.’ (Isa. 3:10) Going up therefore, they cast down the just man, saying to one another, ‘Let us stone James the Just.’ And they began to stone him, as he did not die immediately when cast down but turning round, he knelt down saying, ‘I entreat thee, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ Thus they were stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, a son of the Rechabites, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out saying, ‘Cease, what are you doing? Justus is Praying for you.’ And one of them, a fuller, beat the brains out of Justus with the club that he used to beat out clothes. Thus he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot where his tombstone is still remaining, by the temple. He became a faithful witness, both to the Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ” (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.11-18).<sup>30</sup>

Many of the Jewish leaders, who do not appear to be Believers in Yeshua, were greatly offended that this barbarous action took place, and they informed the Roman authorities about this, as being most unlawful, placing much of the blame at the Sadducees (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.21-23; Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.197-203). Even with various Jewish religious leaders not totally in agreement with James' belief in Yeshua as Messiah, they still ably recognized James' piety, and how no one deserved to be taken out and murdered like he was.

## WHO WAS THE TARGET AUDIENCE OF THIS LETTER?

It is important to appropriately deduce the audience of the letter of James, which is needed to then ascertain the date of the epistle, and where its author was located while composing it. The Epistle of James is classified among the General Epistles of the Apostolic Scriptures, not only because of its rather general or basic spiritual themes—not addressing a specific issue or crisis in an ancient congregation—but also because no specific audience, in a geographical location, is provided for the reader. Examiners are not entirely sure if there was a specific assembly, assemblies, or informal fellowship(s) of Believers in view.

More conclusions can be drawn from internal clues seen in James, about the demographics of the letter's audience. James' discussion on faith and works was necessitated by many not providing for the needy among them, via essentials such as food and clothing (2:14-26). There are woes issued by the author upon wealthy landowners, who fail to pay their workers an adequate wage (5:1-6). The need for caring for the poor, and a denunciation of the rich, indicates that there was a tension between the lower and higher classes among James'

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pp 60-61.

audience.<sup>31</sup> The reference to agricultural conditions (5:4, 7) suggests a more rural environment, although with trading activity also mentioned (4:13-15), those who were somewhat metropolitan cannot be excluded.

One important component of the identity of James' audience, regards the author's reference to not only suffering (5:10), but to trial (1:12) and the crown of life (*ton stephanon tēs zōēs, τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς*). It can be thought that James' primary audience was composed of Jewish Believers who had fled the Land of Israel following the martyrdom of Stephen. Because Stephen was a Hellenistic, Greek-speaking Jew (Acts 6:5-9), James' primary audience may have been Hellenistic Jews living in the Diaspora, with a substantial part of them living in "Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch" (Acts 11:19). Donald W. Burdick is one who observes, "It is most reasonable to assume that James, the leading elder of the Jerusalem church, would feel responsible for these former 'parishioners,' and attempt to instruct them somewhat as he would have done had they still been under his care in Jerusalem...he writes with the note of authority expected of one who had been recognized as a spiritual leader in the Jerusalem church."<sup>32</sup>

The only specific information, regarding the audience of James, is seen in the opening greeting, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1, RSV), *en tē diaspora* (ἐν τῇ διασπορῇ). **A Jewish audience for the Epistle of James is assumed by all readers, regardless of additional details.** Some of the additional factors to consider are noted by D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, in *An Introduction to the New Testament*,

"The word translated 'scattered among the nations' [NIV]—*διασπορά* (*diaspora*, 'Diaspora')—was used to denote Jews living outside of Palestine (see John 7:35) and, by extension, the place in which they lived. But the word also had a metaphorical sense, characterizing Christians generally as those who live away from their true heavenly home (1 Peter 1:1). The early date and Jewishness of James favors the more literal meaning. Like other Jewish authors before him, James sends consolation and exhortation to the dispersed covenant people of God."<sup>33</sup>

That Jewish Believers, and even descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom of Israel, who had been displaced into the immediate area just north of the Land of Israel many centuries earlier by Assyria, and were connected to the Jewish community, can be concluded as those among James' audience. While it is not difficult for modern readers to recognize ethnic Israelites among James' audience, it can be difficult for some readers to think that those entirely of the nations, could have been among James' audience as well. Whether or not non-Jewish Believers, mainly Greeks and Romans and various others, were among James' audience, is (1) theologically determined not only by James' greeting in 1:1, but James' intention in Acts 15:15-18 regarding the Tabernacle of David. It is (2) also determined by various appeals to classical philosophy embedded in James' exhortations, which would indicate a more diverse audience than just First Century Jews. And (3) the later James' epistle is dated, the likelihood that non-Jews were a part of the intended audience of the letter, as well, necessarily increases.

Recognizing that James himself made light of Amos 9:11-12 at the Jerusalem Council (from the Septuagint, no less), the identity of this letter's audience as "the twelve tribes," can definitely take on an eschatological dynamic. While there should be no doubting the fact that ethnic Israelites, of both Jews and descendants of the exiled Northern Kingdom who were part of the Jewish community, were among James' audience, Carson and Moo note how "After the exile, the twelve tribes no longer existed physically," meaning as distinct groups, "but the phrase became a way of denoting the regathered people of God of the last days (see Ezek. 47:13; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 7:4-8; 21:12)."<sup>34</sup> If this factor bears some merit, then God's restored people in the eschaton is to include all Twelve Tribes of Israel recognizable (Isaiah 11:11-16; Zechariah 10:6-12), and concurrent with this, incorporate the righteous from the nations into an expanded Kingdom realm of Israel, as James testified in Acts 15:15-18 (cf. Amos 9:11-12, LXX).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, pp 549-550.

<sup>32</sup> Donald W. Burdick, "James," in Frank E. Gaebelien, ed. et. al., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:162-163.

<sup>33</sup> Carson and Moo, 628.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, fn#35.

Even though James' primary audience was Jewish Believers in Yeshua, this does not discount the possibility at all that non-Jews were also included among some of its original readers. James' reference "To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1, RSV), may be viewed as (1) a reference to his Jewish brethren outside the Land of Israel, but (2) also a reference to the restored Kingdom of God at large, welcoming in those from the nations who have believed in the God of Israel. While a presumed dating of James' composition in the early 40s suggests that various numbers of non-Jews were only just starting to receive Yeshua, James' writing and distinctively Jewish character by no means excludes these people from also being some readers of his letter. McCartney expresses how, "we know from Acts that some Gentiles were being converted even before the Pauline mission and certainly before the controversy of circumcision arose. Since James is addressing churches outside Palestine, it is likely that some of them had Gentile converts."<sup>35</sup>

The Epistle of James does follow a style consistent with some kind of sermon or homily, and its words do tend to speak generally to the condition of God's people, not really taking on as situation-specific a message, compared to other Apostolic compositions. Conservative examiners will recognize how it is entirely possible, if not probable, that much of the transcribed material in the Epistle of James originated out of some kind of oral sermon or message.<sup>36</sup> The high quality of Greek, in the Epistle of James, has caused various liberals to doubt genuine Jamean authorship,<sup>37</sup> and as previously described, others think that a follower of James the Just took his sayings and compiled them into an epistle, to honor him and preserve his legacy, after his death, someone who is thought to have high Greek skills.

The language issue, surrounding the composition of James, does have some bearing on the identity and makeup of James' audience. There are certainly those within today's Messianic movement, who have tried to suggest that James, primarily writing to his fellow Jews, would have written his letter in Hebrew or Aramaic. Yet, if much of James' intended audience were in the Diaspora, dispersed following Stephen's martyrdom, this argument holds little weight. Greek would have been the international language of business that they would have understood, and it would have been the language that would have gained the largest readership—especially if a substantial part of James' audience was in "Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch" (Acts 11:19).

Also to be considered, is whether or not a First Century Jewish person, from the Land of Israel, would have even had competence in Greek. While this is a debate for many of today's Messianic people, it is not a debate for those in contemporary Biblical Studies, who recognize the Land of Israel and/or Roman province of Judea as being a multi-lingual place. Among the many potential quotations which could be offered, R.W. Wall asserts the following, from his entry on the letter of James in the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*,

"One need only appeal to the mounting evidence that demonstrates a fairly active social intercourse between Hellenistic and Palestinian cultures during the late Second Temple period. Religious Jews, especially in Galilee, may well have been anti-Hellenistic during the days immediately before and after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70...however, Jew and Greek intermingled, if a little uneasily. Thus Acts describes a Jerusalem congregation that included Greek-speaking Jews and a pastor (James) who cites the Greek translation (LXX) of Scripture when instructing them (Acts 15:17-18; cf. Jas 4:6). Sharply put, James grew up in a Hellenized Jewish culture where Greek was used and perhaps learned well enough to write this book."<sup>38</sup>

James the Just, being bilingual in Hebrew or Aramaic and Greek, at the very least, is not something that can be dismissed—if he was truly the leader of the Jerusalem assembly, and as such regularly interacted with Believers from all over the Mediterranean, who were visiting Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup> Ben Witherington III observes on the language of James' letter, how "it is the kind of Greek that someone who has learned it well and is

<sup>35</sup> McCartney, 33.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J.A. Motyer, *The Message of James* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), pp 11-13; Witherington, 389 makes some observations on the oratory style of the epistle.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert Bassler, "The Letter of James," in Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, NRSV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp 427.

<sup>38</sup> Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, 546; cf. Guthrie, pp 734-736; Johnson, in NIB, 12:183; Carson and Moo, 624; McCartney, pp 27-28; McKnight, pp 31-34.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Moo, pp 15-15.